

**SOVIET CAMPAIGN IN AFGHANISTAN:  
Misapplications of the Principles of War**

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## **Team Biographies**

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## **CAVEAT**

The meeting described in this manuscript is the product of the writers' imaginations - a fictional conceit devised to better illuminate critical issues in two separate military operations conducted on common terrain. As such, thoughts and words credited to the characters in this scenario are the product of the writing team's synthesis of many texts and references. Where appropriate, credit for commentary or analysis has been noted.

General Tommy Franks, Commander of U.S. Central Command, was exhausted. Since the terrorist attacks on the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., he had pushed his staff relentlessly to develop sound military courses of action to support President Bush's anticipated response. His headquarters buzzed with activity and it seemed he had obligations during every minute of his personal daily schedule. Following a video teleconference with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, he pulled his aide aside and directed him to rework the schedule so that he could get fifteen minutes of shuteye before the afternoon intelligence briefing. Still wearing his desert BDU blouse, he stretched his angular frame across the sofa in his office and closed his eyes.

The general awoke to the sound of voices. The room was dark save for the lamp on his desk. By its white light he saw the silhouettes of two men reviewing a map that covered the desk. Observing that the general was awake, the smaller man excused himself from the conversation and approached Franks, who was now sitting on the edge of the sofa.

Wearing a high-collared tunic and broad gold epaulets, the man clicked the heels of his highly polished boots together, bowed slightly and introduced himself, "I am General Carl von Clausewitz. I am confident that you are familiar with my writings on the subject of war, but given the current circumstances I felt a personal tutorial might be helpful."

General Franks rubbed his eyes, rose to his feet, and thanked the general for his consideration on the matter. Ever gracious, Clausewitz accepted his thanks, then said, "Your time is precious, sir, so let us press this matter. If I may be so bold as to ask, where do you anticipate conducting your initial military actions?"

"Afghanistan," Franks drawled.

“I thought as much,” said the Prussian theorist “and for that reason I’ve asked an officer with extensive experience in that theater of operations to join us.” Together they walked to the desk.

As they approached the man who had remained at the desk snapped to attention. By the light he could see that the man wore the gray dress uniform of a General Officer in the Soviet Red Army. “Colonel General Tukharinov, first Commanding General of the Soviet Republic’s 40th Army–Afghanistan Occupation Force,<sup>1</sup> at your service sirs.”

There was an awkward silence that was broken only when Franks turned to Clausewitz and bluntly stated, “Carl, I appreciate your offer of assistance, but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an unmitigated disaster diplomatically, economically, and militarily. I think we might be mining the wrong vein.”

Clausewitz was insistent however. “Tommy, there is no finer teacher than failure. The Soviet Campaign in Afghanistan from December 1979 to February 1989 was flawed from its inception because Soviet leadership failed to adapt three Principles of War – Objective, Mass and Offensive to its effort.”

Tukharinov thoughtfully nodded his head in affirmation then continued where Clausewitz had left off. “To appreciate my country’s failures in this conflict you must first understand the environment that led to the decision to employ force.” He listed three topics for review:

- Historical perspective of relations between the USSR and Afghanistan
- The Theater of Operations
- Soviet Strategic and Political Objectives

Once again Clausewitz spoke, “Once you understand those issues, we shall discuss the Soviet force’s campaign execution. From such a review we may naturally appraise the operation for its adherence to or disregard for any, or all, of the Principles of War.” He fixed an icy stare

on General Tukharinov. The Russian shifted his weight uncomfortably from one foot to the other and then turned to study a remote point on the map. Clausewitz continued, “As I stated previously, we will focus our attention on the Principles of Objective, Mass and Offensive.”

“All with the purpose of shaping my thinking about the proper employment of U.S. forces in Afghanistan?” Franks intoned.

““Precisely.” answered Clausewitz and Tukharinov in unison.

Tukharinov began to speak: “Virtually unknown to most Americans before the terrorist attacks, Afghanistan has long been the object of imperialist intentions – Great Britain sought to control the country and its population throughout the 1800s and into the early 20th century. By the middle of the 20th century the Soviet Union, seeking to expand its influence in Europe and Asia, focused much of its foreign policy on small countries near its borders. Soviet leaders considered Afghanistan rich territory in which to seed Communist support. Illustrative of the country’s importance, Afghans were the first recipients of Soviet economic aid in the immediate post-Stalin period. This assistance, which would continue to flow for 25 years, was aimed at improving strategic infrastructure within Afghan borders. An all-weather highway system connected to the USSR’s transportation network and Soviet-built airfields now cover Afghanistan. Soviet support of Afghan transportation was so prevalent that in deriding my country’s invasion before the House of Commons in 1980, Great Britain’s Prime Minister said “Soviet tanks crossed Afghanistan on roads built with Soviet money, and their aircraft landed on airfields similarly financed.”<sup>2</sup>

“Soviet economic aid was overt; and, although more subdued, our political and subversive agendas within the country were no less aggressive,” Tukharinov continued. “The pro-Soviet *People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan* (PDPA) was formed in 1965, but had little influence as the country was ruled by a familial monarchy. In 1973 Mohammed Daoud led a vio-

lent coup to overthrow the monarchy and install himself as Premier. Although Daoud did not support the PDPA, his military organization was rife with Russian advisors and young Afghan officers trained within the borders of the Soviet Union which allowed the USSR to exert influence and garner pro-Communist support without taking overt action.<sup>3</sup> By 1978, Russian leaders recognized that strict tribalism and strong fundamental adherence to Islam were so prevalent throughout Afghanistan that an overt attempt to take over the country, as Red Army forces had done in many Eastern European countries in the 1950s and 1960s, would be met by national resistance. Instead my country's leaders opted to wait for the largely pro-Soviet military and the PDPA to effect governmental change in the form of a coup.<sup>4</sup> That uprising would occur in April 1978."

"Soviet officials watched, during the 20 months from April 1978 to December 1979, watched as Afghanistan shifted from the regime of Nur Mohammed Tarakki, a pro-Soviet who had been put in place by the PDPA and supported Russian intervention in his country, to the regime of Hafizullah Amin. Tarakki's governance was doomed by the strict social structure that Russian leaders feared; after rising to power Tarakki's supporters in the military carried out massive purges of Afghan tribesmen in an attempt to break the tribal and religious ties of the people.<sup>5</sup> The backlash was a burgeoning anti-Soviet sentiment among tribesmen throughout the country. Amin, Tarakki's prime minister, recognized the Afghan president's dwindling support among his own populace and overthrew and killed him in September 1979.<sup>6</sup> The rise to power of Amin, a man who had come to national prominence within a pro-Soviet regime and who continued to enjoy the benefits of Russian economic aid, virtually assured the Soviet Union that it would not realize its goal – now more than a quarter of a century old – of gaining de facto control of Afghanistan through an alliance with a Soviet-friendly government.<sup>7</sup> As Amin came to power the

diminishment of Soviet influence was already evident — 22 of Afghanistan's 28 provinces were said to be in nationalist or anti-Soviet rebel hands.”<sup>8</sup>

Tukharinov took a sip of water and pressed on: “With a 25-year economic, political, and subversive investment on the verge of failure and Soviet strategic objectives for the region at risk, military intervention was seen as the only choice.”<sup>9</sup>

Clausewitz stood and said, “Armed with this sense of history, we should briefly discuss the unique character of the theater of operations. Afghanistan is a large, dry and rugged land that covers an area roughly equivalent to your state of Alaska. The country is mountainous in the east and predominantly desert in the south and west. Its cities, such as Kabul and Khandahar, are equally as important to the populace for their spiritual significance as they are as seats of commerce.”<sup>10</sup> The mountainous terrain serves to create natural chokepoints, funneling forces through only a handful of vulnerable, winding passes. The climate is, in a word, extreme. Winters are bitter and snowy while summer is dry and suffocating throughout most of the country.<sup>11</sup> Inhabitants of this unforgiving land are hard and hearty. Predominantly Muslim, Afghanistan is a civilization of tribes — allegiance to one's family and tribe is paramount. Outside of city borders, piracy, thievery, and feudal infighting among rival warlords are the norm.<sup>12</sup> To conduct an operation under such inhospitable conditions is a daunting task,” Clausewitz smiled.

General Franks grimaced, “You can say that again.”

“Surely to have made it this far in the United States Army you are, no doubt, familiar with my concept of the Trinity of War.” Clausewitz posed this question as a statement.

Franks replied curtly, “The People, the Commander and the Government.”

“Not eloquent, but quite correct,” noted Clausewitz. “Therefore I've asked Tukharinov to speak with you about the Soviet leadership's political aims and rationale for war.”

Tukharinov made a face like he'd eaten a lemon whole, then began to speak: "As a soldier I have little use for politicians, but it is an incontrovertible fact that political ideology played a significant role in the decision of the Soviets. Two concepts are important to understand in our discussion. The first is the Brezhnev Doctrine. Predicated on the beliefs of our former Head of State, the Brezhnev Doctrine embodies the essence of Cold War thinking. It is actually quite similar to the Domino Theory that many American leaders espoused during the same time. The American belief held that if one democracy fell into socialist hands it could cause a catastrophic chain of failed democracies throughout a particular region. Along with many other issues this theory, though never proven, moved several U.S. presidents to continue intervention in the Vietnam War. The Brezhnev Doctrine had the same effect on Soviet decisions in Afghanistan. Stated simply, the basic tenet of the Brezhnev Doctrine was: "[W]ith an ally state about to fall to anarchy or outright hostile forces, intervention was an essentially defensive, reactive move to forestall such a humiliating and potentially dangerous outcome."<sup>13</sup>

"The USSR was the natural ally of anticolonial and anti-imperialist national liberation movements, but in this case you clearly had a country that was not a formal member of the socialist camp. Nevertheless, the USSR essentially regarded Afghanistan as a member of the wider socialist family, to which the same rules could be applied."<sup>14</sup>

"The second concept of consequence to our discussion is the *rim lands strategy*. In its extreme form the Brezhnev Doctrine has been described as fear of Americanism<sup>15</sup>; in the same way many people consider the prime motivation behind Soviet activity and support in outlying Middle East oil-producing nations as a policy geared toward denying the United States access to the petroleum products of those countries.<sup>16</sup> Russian ideologues would adopt a different stance, arguing instead that in the same way that the United States embraced its role as protector of the hemisphere through the Monroe Doctrine, the USSR was simply protecting its own sphere of

influence through engagement in the rim lands. Our strategic objective in Afghanistan was to establish a friendly buffer state that we, the Soviet Union, could control.”

General Franks massaged his temples as if he were trying to rid himself of a persistent headache. Clausewitz leaned close to him and said, “We still have important ground to cover. Between us, General Tukharinov and I have fashioned a suitable lens through which you may view Soviet Operations in Afghanistan — a historical perspective of relations between the two countries prior to the invasion, an appreciation for the characteristics of the theater of operations, and a clearer understanding of overarching Soviet political policies that shaped decisions to opt for a military response. Tukharinov, if you would kindly review some of the salient points of your military’s campaign execution.”

“Gladly,” said the Russian general, apparently pleased that he was no longer bound to a discussion of political motivations. “Our invasion was brutal and enacted by the maximum force available with the intent of rapidly overpowering resistance forces.<sup>17</sup> We massed conventional forces and attacked into Afghanistan. An American National Security Affairs advisor, Mr. Steven J. Blanks, in his review “Operational and Strategic Lessons of the War in Afghanistan,” described my army’s actions in this manner:

It was no accident the initial invasion resembled the successful invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Soviet military thinking at this time totally ignored the entire concept of low-intensity or unconventional warfare. Using classic Soviet doctrine and formations formulated for fighting a war in the European Theater, the initial invasion consisted of a vertical envelopment supported by ground based motorized rifle divisions to seize key airbases and airports to ensure air superiority. The Soviet Army quickly fanned out to occupy key C3I areas, fortresses commanding roads and key cities.

“After initial successes in the north, including the capture of the capital city of Kabul, Soviet forces began a lengthy buildup in the southern and western regions of the country. This buildup contributed nothing to overcoming tribal resistance to a pro-Soviet regime, as Afghan dissent was more heavily concentrated in the central and eastern regions of the nation. Moving

troops to southern and western positions did, however, improve Russian troop positioning relative to Western, or more accurately American, energy sources.”<sup>18</sup>

“Despite the initial success of the invasion, it soon became apparent that Soviet equipment functioned inadequately and force structure was inappropriate for the task at hand.<sup>19</sup> Our offensive bogged down and our rapidly moving invasion force devolved perilously into a lethargic army of occupation. Red Army units deployed to quell anti-Soviet sentiment with a single massive and lethal assault, but, as the pace of the conflict slackened, the forces adopted a significantly different approach to occupation operations. Specifically, the troops engaged in stabilizing the country by garrisoning the main routes, major cities, airbases and logistics sites; relieving the Afghan government forces of garrison duties and pushing them into the countryside to battle the resistance; providing logistic, air, artillery and intelligence support to the Afghan forces; providing minimum interface between the Soviet occupation forces and the local populace; accepting minimal Soviet casualties; and strengthening the Afghan forces, so once the resistance was defeated, the Soviet Army could be withdrawn.”<sup>20</sup>

“The operational change from invasion to occupation revealed glaring inadequacies in Soviet doctrine and command and control. Unwilling or unable to adapt to counter the lighter, unconventional methods employed by the Afghan *mujaheddin*, the Soviet approach became one of attrition.” Tukharinov gazed vacantly into space as he made the statement. General Franks empathized with him; he disagreed with everything that the USSR had represented, but at this moment he shared a common appreciation of the risks of deploying forces that were insufficient to complete a task.

“With so much momentum and early success, it is difficult to imagine the Soviet Army losing the initiative and being forced into a war of attrition with the *mujaheddin*. But it happened. Why it happened is the crux of our discussion gentlemen.” Clausewitz paused for effect.

“It happened because Soviet Leadership failed to adapt Objective, Mass, and Offensive appropriately to their operations.”

He continued, “In my treatise *On War*, I wrote this concerning Objective:

The more modest your own political aim, the less importance you attach to it and the less reluctantly you will abandon it if you must. The political object — the original motive for the war — will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires. The political object cannot, however, in *itself* provide the standards of measurement.

The Soviet leadership’s objectives for Afghanistan were as follows:

- Replace the Amin government with one more compliant with Soviet wishes
- Occupy cities and C<sup>3</sup> nodes, roads, and air bases
- Stabilize by providing a screen behind which pro-Soviet Afghan forces would reconstitute under a more popular regime and rebuild from the decimation inflicted by rebel forces to a point where they could engage and defeat the *mujaheddin*
- Intimidate the *mujaheddin* and/or foreign patrons, particularly Pakistan<sup>21</sup>

Confident of the attainability of these objectives, Moscow’s initial estimate of the operation’s duration was just six months.”

Clausewitz offered, “In contrast the objective of the *mujaheddin* was far less complex. Simply put, their objective was the expulsion of foreign troops and influence. Do not be deceived by its simplicity, however; Afghans were prepared to engage in a protracted war to accomplish it.”

“By the mid-1980s Soviet leaders began to realize the errors in their definition of their objectives. Once Soviet paratroopers set foot on Afghan soil with the intent of supporting a government at odds with its own populace, the legitimacy of the Amin regime or its successor was irreversibly compromised. Since no government friendly to Moscow or its military harbored realistic hope of gaining popular support, the Soviets were forced into an unconventional war for which they had neither trained nor equipped their forces. While the initial invasion using Euro-

pean tactics was successful, that same mixture of forces and tactics could not be applied successfully to a theater where guerilla war dominated. It was soon apparent that the political center of gravity was not Babrak Karmal, who replaced the deposed Amin, or his government, but rather the Soviet forces. Changes in Soviet tactics, developed to take the fight to the *mujaheddin*, were implemented, although very slowly. As new doctrine, the new airborne and heliborne tactics proved formidable, but the Soviets never abandoned their strategy of holding major urban centers while allowing the *mujaheddin* to control the countryside. In pursuit of their stated objectives the Soviets made other miscalculations:

- Overestimating Karmal's capacity to unite and lead a fractious PDPA
- Underestimating the ability of Afghan tribalism to render the PDPA ineffective
- Surmising, incorrectly, that a military invasion could assure stability and permit reconstitution of the Afghan military
- Discounting both the national and international reaction to the invasion<sup>22</sup>

Clausewitz eyed General Franks like a teacher surveying a student. "Correctly identifying your objective is critical to winning any war. Now tell me how you would define your objective in the coming conflict."

General Franks began, "In accordance with the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Soviet Union had a broad strategic objective of furthering the rise of socialist states throughout the world. The fact that this objective synchronized with their rim land strategy, where Mother Russia attempted to bring to bear influence on the West's energy sources, further justified intervention. The Soviets felt the only way to fulfill this strategy was to ensure that a friendly Communist regime was in power. Their means for achieving that was military intervention to legitimize the Karmal regime. The opposite occurred. The Karmal government had no real power and was seen as a puppet to the Soviets. The objective of installing a more compliant government was unattainable from the outset. The real power rested with the Soviet Army.

“My objective is credible and attainable. Rather than supporting an ineffectual government, U.S. forces will prosecute the removal of the Taliban government because they offer sanctuary to Al Qaeda. Instead of deploying overwhelming numbers of U.S. troops that could easily be interpreted as yet another foreign invader, limited forces under CENTCOM control work with tribal leaders to attack and overthrow the Taliban. Using small units of Special Forces attached to Afghani militias, the U.S. forces will not engender resentment and hostility within the local population, which views the Taliban as a harsh and oppressive regime. Simultaneously with the removal of the Taliban, U.S. forces will provide humanitarian assistance to indigenous tribes through food and supply drops to isolated areas. Our objective is the removal of Al Qaeda and the Taliban. To achieve this we must win the support of the people under their governance.”

“A promising approach. Now, please define Mass,” Clausewitz directed.

“The general responded, “I like your definition. Mass is the concentration of power at the decisive point and time, including not only troops and materiel, but also leadership and morale — everything that influences the action at the decisive point.”<sup>23</sup>

“Remembering that Mass includes all influences at a decisive point allows us to look at the Soviet Campaign in an interesting light when considering their failures. The war in Afghanistan was indisputable evidence to the Soviets that a conscript army is ill-suited for an unconventional war. This discovery is germane to our discussion not because the Red Army lacked sufficient conscripts to field a fighting force. On the contrary, conscription allowed the Soviets to field a large force. They were unable to mass morale among these troops, however. Moscow miscalculated by using units composed of Category III conscripts, made up of predominantly Muslim troops. Category III units were traditionally the poorest-trained units in the Soviet Army and proved militarily incompetent due to their inadequate training and dismal morale. The original intent of using Muslim troops was to facilitate socialization of the Muslim troops with the

Afghani people. Once these troops realized, however, that they were facing other Muslims and not Chinese or American troops, signs of solidarity with the local populace, rather than Red Army allegiance appeared. These factors in some cases resulted in collaboration between Muslim conscripts and the *mujaheddin*, resulting in a force in disarray. In Afghanistan, where tactical actions abounded and no one action could be seen as strategic in nature, solidarity of troops with NCOs in units was crucial. Factors such as ethnic enmity, serf-like treatment of the men, hazing, and corruption throughout the entire military undermined solidarity and combat performance over time, particularly in ethnically mixed units.”<sup>24</sup>

“In stark contrast the *mujaheddin* were remarkably successful at massing the morale of their freedom fighters. Even in the face of overwhelming enemy numerical superiority, morale was high. Afghans sympathized with the resistance and morale increased as more and more battles were successfully fought against the Soviet forces.”

“What is your intent where Mass is concerned, General?” Clausewitz asked.

“Unlike my Soviet counterpart, whose forces did not train for unconventional warfare, initial U.S. forces in the theater of operations will include Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines specifically trained in that discipline. They will be adept at working with an indigenous population and massing indigenous morale: soldiers who speak the language, appreciate local customs and — just as important — know how to mass the available U.S. combat power with the capabilities of the Afghani ground forces. In so doing we will ensure that Afghans do not view our operation as an invasion, but rather as support to their efforts to overthrow an oppressive regime. Following the fall of the Taliban, it will be necessary to deploy and employ large numbers of forces in the effort to rid Afghanistan of Al Qaeda. While the conscripts of the Soviet Army were poorly trained, lacked discipline, and had low morale in the fight against fellow Muslims, conventional U.S. forces display none of these traits. Our disciplined and well-trained forces

have proven they are flexible enough to conduct a wide range of missions. These include assisting local security forces, conducting local patrols, and offering humanitarian assistance to large-scale combat operations. Using the right force for the right job goes a long way toward maintaining troop morale.” General Franks continued, “Morale is critical, but U.S. forces will use other methods to ensure that we enhance Mass in this effort. I intend to use precision munitions and air power in concert with ground forces to effect rapid and decisive engagements. Differing from recent operations in Kosovo, which employed predominantly air power, combined techniques will allow more timely and accurate massing of combat power. By maintaining a small footprint of U.S. ground forces allied with local militias, these forces will be able to fix on the enemy and then request precision-guided munitions on enemy locations to achieve maximum effect. The efficiency of these techniques will erode the enemy’s morale and will to continue combat operations against American forces.”

“Outstanding. I’m glad to see that you appreciate the depth of these principles. There is no set answer, no single action nor decision which would allow you to say that you had complied completely with a Principle of War. A wise operational artist revisits a plan constantly looking for ways to improve it.” Clausewitz composed himself as Franks and Tukharinov chuckled. “Forgive me for that unseemly outburst. The final Principle of War that I wish to discuss is Offensive or, more specifically, the use of initiative in combat to set the time, place, strength, type, and direction of attack. To elaborate further, the force that attacks has the greatest advantage of initiative. The army that takes the offensive decides what to do and the defense must conform. Conformation is a time-consuming process. To be sure, it is more costly to take the offensive. That cost is extracted from a force’s troops while overcoming initial objectives; in addition there are costs to fighting on unknown terrain with extended communications that may grow longer.<sup>25</sup> A sharp attack that carries the objective is better than a slow attack of attrition. It is that final

fact that struck a mortal blow to Soviet operations in Afghanistan.” Clausewitz let his judgment set in with Franks before he continued. “Employing a swift initial invasion, Soviet troops rapidly seized the initiative and secured their tactical and operational objectives. As the nature of the war shifted to counterinsurgency, however, Soviet leadership faltered and ultimately abandoned its offensive mindset. We have already discussed how the rapid invasion of December 1979 gave way to an occupation force that remained in garrison whenever possible. The Soviet Army seemed loath to change doctrine or tactics even when faced with defeat on the battlefield. In 1984 the Russians sought to regain the offensive by carrying out operations with airborne and heliborne units in place of the huge armored columns that they had favored throughout the previous five years. In April 1984 Soviet heliborne troops seized control of two-thirds of the Panshir valley. The offensive through this critical pass slowed when the Red Army was unable to destroy completely the *mujaheddin* forces in short order. Rather than renew the attack using the new tactics that they had so recently validated, the Soviets returned to well entrenched government bases, which had no mobility, thereby surrendering the offensive again. An offensive around the city of Herat in June 1984 fared well for the Soviet forces in terms of territory gained, but resulted in the worst year of the entire conflict in terms of Soviet casualties. Faced with growing dissension in the force, the Soviets abandoned the offensive once more.<sup>26</sup> As these examples demonstrate, the Soviets lost the initiative soon after the invasion due in large part to the offensive tactics they employed. Although they enjoyed moderate success once they adopted new tactics, their offensive operations ultimately failed.”

General Franks didn’t wait to be asked: “Offensive is a critical component of any U.S. operation and so it will be in Afghanistan. U.S. forces will seize, retain, and exploit the initiative by employing superior ISR capabilities, precision munitions, and local militias well-versed in the tactics and terrain of Afghanistan. U.S. forces will attack at the time and place of their choosing

and once they have achieved initial success they will maintain a rapid pace of operations throughout the theater. On the run with no time to regroup and consolidate combat power to mount a formidable defense, Taliban forces will virtually disintegrate beneath the force of the U.S. offensive.”

Clausewitz and Tukharinov rose from their seats. “I’m afraid that we must leave, but I’m interested in what impressions you will take away from this discussion,” said the Prussian as he fastened the buttons of his tunic.

General Franks replied, “The Soviets entered a conflict in 1979 with a preponderance of troops and resources. Given solely that fact, an individual might logically deduce that the Soviets should have won the war. But they were not victorious because they were lacking in something far more crucial on the battlefield. The Soviets failed to adapt meaningful concepts of Objective, Mass and Offensive to their campaign in Afghanistan.

“Although the USSR had developed relations with the Afghans over a span of a quarter of a century, it was unable to develop realistic, attainable objectives to pursue in a conflict. Pursuing a flawed objective is as hazardous to a force as entering combat with no objective at all.”

“Secondly, the Soviets interpreted Mass from the purist viewpoint that a large force will tip the scale of conflict. Especially in the context of the asymmetric, unconventional war that they prosecuted, there are far more subtle ways to employ mass. The Soviets failed to recognize that using disgruntled conscripts to fight against a populace with whom the conscripts had more in common than they did with their fellow Red Army soldiers could have serious consequences.”

“Lastly, offensive is crucial to control of the battlefield. It may be gained through a variety of methods, but a force that defaults to a defensive posture will never gain it. An aggressive offensive would not have overcome the absence of a true objective for the Soviets, but relinquishing the initiative ensured that they would not win the war.”

“Finally, I will take away the idea that any force is susceptible to these failures. Through the lens of history it is easy to discern the errors of the Soviet military. But I recall that while the conflict in Afghanistan was ongoing, the U.S. forces that I led during the time trained primarily to defeat the Soviets in combat because they were our most credible threat. Any force is susceptible to failure if it abandons the Principles of War.”

And after that statement, General Carl von Clausewitz and Colonel General Tukharinov departed out the side door.

“General, sorry to interrupt but the J-2 is standing by to give the afternoon Intel Brief.”

It was the voice of his aide. General Franks opened his eyes; he was lying on the sofa in his office.

“I hated to wake you, but the brief is ready. You sure looked peaceful lying there with that book on your chest.”

Franks sat up, ready for another meeting and looked at the book he now held in his hand, *On War* by Carl von Clausewitz. He smiled for a moment as he examined the volume then set it on the table by the sofa. He rose and smoothed the wrinkles from his uniform. Staffers were waiting he thought, better get moving; but just before he left the general nodded in the direction of the table and told his aide, “Bring that book along. We are going to need it.”

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- <sup>1</sup> Galeotti, Mark *Afghanistan: The Soviet Union's Last War*. London: Frank Cass & Co, Ltd, 1995, 9.
- <sup>2</sup> Rees, David, "Afghanistan's Role in Soviet Strategy," *Conflict Studies*, No. 118, May 1980, 1.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 2.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 2-3.
- <sup>7</sup> Roy, Olivier. "The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War," *Adelphi Papers* 259, 1991. 27.
- <sup>8</sup> Rees, David. 3.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Bergen, Peter. *Holy War Inc.* Simon and Schuster audiotope (abridged), 2001.
- <sup>11</sup> Galeotti, Mark. 4.
- <sup>12</sup> Bergen, Peter.
- <sup>13</sup> Galeotti, Mark. 11.
- <sup>14</sup> Blank, Stephen J., "Operational and Strategic Lessons of War in Afghanistan," 1979-90, Sept 1991, 20. and Oliver Roy, 13.
- <sup>15</sup> Galeotti, Mark. 11.
- <sup>16</sup> Rees, David. 5.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 3.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 5.
- <sup>19</sup> Grau, Lester W., "The Bear Went Over The Mountain," p. XVII
- <sup>20</sup> McMichael, Scott R., "Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan", London: Brassey's 1991, 10; and Gromov, Boris, "Ogranichennyy Kontingent [Limited contingent], Moscow, Progress, 1994, 172.
- <sup>21</sup> Hart, Douglas M., "Low-intensity Conflict in Afghanistan: The Soviet View," *Survival*, Vol XXIV, No.2, March-April 1982, 62.
- <sup>22</sup> Blank, Stephen J. 36-37.
- <sup>23</sup> Von Clausewitz, Carl., Gatzke, Hans W. editor, *Principles of War*, 1960, 46.
- <sup>24</sup> "Principles of War," Tulane University Navy ROTC powerpoint briefing. Available from [http://www.nrotc.tulane.edu/Naval\\_Science/Evolution%20of%20Warfare/2-B%20Concepts%20Continued%20\(MOO SEMUSS\).ppt](http://www.nrotc.tulane.edu/Naval_Science/Evolution%20of%20Warfare/2-B%20Concepts%20Continued%20(MOO%20SEMUS).ppt)
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Roy, Oliver. 19.